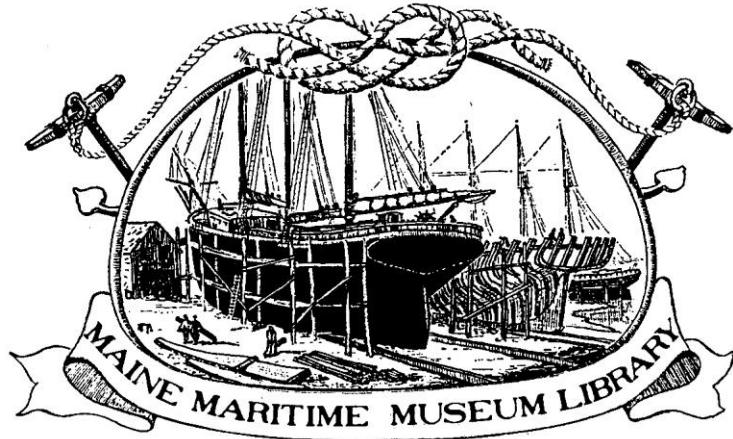


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**Inventory for
Manuscript Collection
MS-12**

Fisher/Work/Tarbox Family Papers

**1768-1943
Bulk: 1877-1928**

by
Elisabeth Meier
February 2018

1 box
.5 linear feet

Accessions no. 68.2768-2779, 68.2885, and 85.74

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Abstract

Ruth P. (Work) Tarbox (1877-1968)

Augusta Fisher Work (1841-1924)

Abel E. Work, Captain (1834-1895)

Papers, 1768-1943

Bulk dates: 1877-1928

1 box, .5 linear feet

Captain and family from Bath, Maine

This collection contains personal letters, accounts, deeds, receipts, notes, sketches, and other ephemera related to multiple generations of the Fisher/Work/Tarbox family of Bath, Maine. Although the bulk of the collection relates to social life in Bath in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, a substantial subset deals with Captain Abel E. Work's seafaring career. Captain Work's papers include accounts, certificates, business correspondence, and letters to and from his wife, Augusta (Fisher) Work.

Acquired in three parts: one gift from the Ruth Tarbox Estate in 1968 and two gifts from John L. Sanborn in 1968 and 1985.

MS-012. Accession #68.2768-2779, #68.2885, and #85.74.

Finding aid (folder-level control) in repository.

Added entries—persons:

Fisher, George (1839-1916)

Tarbox, Alfred L. (1867-1952)

Tarbox, Alfred Lemont Jr. (1904-1935)

Tarbox, Bernard L. (1883-)

Tarbox, Ruth P. (Work) (1877-1968)

Work, Abel E., Captain (1834-1895)

Work, Augusta Fisher (1841-1924)

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

A. Sewall & Co.

E. & A. Sewall Company (Bath, Me.)

Bombay (Ship : 1858)

Louise (Yacht)

St. Mark (Ship)

Thomas M. Reed (Ship)

Added entries—key terms:

Bath (Me.) – Social Events

Fisher family

Grain trade

Investments

Riggs family

Ship captains

Ship captains' spouses

Shipping

Tarbox family

Work family

Yachts

Acquisition

This collection arrived as three separate gifts. One, 68.2885, was donated by the Ruth Tarbox estate shortly after Ruth Tarbox's death in 1968. Another, 68.2768-2779, was given by James L. Sanborn earlier that same year. Both of these gifts included other media that have been filed separately. James Sanborn donated the last group of material in 1985.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection.

Physical Condition

Most of the documents are in good condition. Some, including Ruth and Alfred L. Tarbox's wedding certificate, are very fragile and missing large fragments. Some pieces also have significant water, smoke, or light damage.

Processing Notes

Because the papers in the three accession groups are so closely related to each other, they have been filed together in this collection to ease access and promote clarity. Documents from individual accessions can be identified by accession number. Documents from 85.74 were originally filed separately in MS-163.

Related Materials

A large group of photographs and postcards from the Tarbox family can be found in PC-61. More documents related to Captain Abel E. Work's career are in the Sewall Family Papers, MS-22. Several account books detailing George Fisher's business and personal finances are in MS-29.

Historical Note

The individuals represented in this collection are related along a matrilineal branch of the Riggs/Fisher/Work/Tarbox family that was based in Bath, Maine.

Ruth Riggs (1812-1910) was the daughter of James Riggs and Jane E. Campbell of Georgetown, Maine. In 1838, she married Addison D. Fisher (1813-1887), a master mariner, also of Georgetown. The couple settled in Arrowsic, where they had three children who survived to adulthood: George (1839-1916), Augusta (1841-1924), and Mary (1850-1942). By 1860, the family had moved to Bath, where they lived on Pearl Street.

Two of Addison and Ruth Fisher's children are represented in this collection. George Fisher became a successful ship chandler and hardware merchant in Bath. He began as a clerk for Samuel D. Bailey, became a partner in the store, and then bought out Bailey's share in 1872 to go into business as George Fisher & Co. In the late 1880s, George Fisher retired from the chandlery business to work as a ship-broker. George, like his sister Mary, never married.

Unlike her siblings, Augusta Fisher did marry. Her husband, Topsham-born sea captain Abel E. Work (1834-1895), sailed in the California grain trade and related long-distance routes.

He worked with a number of Bath's managing owners, among them Arthur Sewall & Co., William Rogers, and George W. Johnson. Captain Work's commands included the *Halcyon* (bark), *Bombay* (ship), *Oregon* (bark), *Thomas M. Reed* (ship), and *St. Mark* (ship).

During Abel Work's long absences, Augusta (Fisher) Work took an active interest in her family's affairs and in the shipping business. After her marriage, she continued to live with her family on Pearl Street until 1883, when she purchased a house at 37 Oak Street while Abel was away at sea.

Abel and Augusta Work had two children: Ruth Pearl (1877-1968) and Louis Malcolm (1880-1882). Ruth grew up in the middle of Bath society. In 1903, she married Alfred L. Tarbox, a Bath native and son of Henry C. and Arameda (Lemont) Tarbox. Rather than setting up a new household, Ruth and Alfred Tarbox moved back into 37 Oak Street, where they would live for the rest of their lives.

Ruth and Alfred L. Tarbox had one son, Alfred Lemont Tarbox Jr. (1904-1935). Often called 'Lemont,' he attended Exeter Academy but died young, possibly of complications from nephritis.

This collection also contains material from one of Alfred L. Tarbox's brothers, Bernard L. Tarbox (1883-19--). Bernard Tarbox went to school in Boston, became a founding partner in Alden & Tarbox, a Boston coal firm, was a member of the Kennebec yacht club, married Bath native Blanche P. Matthews in 1908, and cut short this promising and fashionable career by eloping with his stenographer in 1909. He eventually moved to Baltimore.

Scope and Content Note

This collection spans five generations of the Riggs/Fisher/Work/Tarbox family. However, aside from a 1768 receipt related to a Lamont family estate and an 1859 deed signed by James Riggs and Jane (Campbell) Riggs, the collection was primarily assembled by Augusta (Fisher) Work and her daughter, Ruth (Work) Tarbox.

A substantial subset of the collection covers Captain Abel E. Work's seafaring career from 1873 to 1895. This includes accounts, certificates, and letters of instruction from brokers and owners, as well as letters between Abel Work and his wife, Augusta. As Augusta (Fisher) Work had a sharp interest in shipping, these letters provide a detailed account of the business of many Bath vessels in addition to more sociable reports on acquaintances visited at home or in distant ports. The collection spans the years that Abel Work commanded the *Bombay* (ship), *Thomas M. Reed* (ship), and *St. Mark* (ship).

The bulk of the collection, however, is wholly personal in nature. Much of it is social: calling cards, letter from friends, birthday and holiday cards, sketches, and related ephemera that illuminate the social milieu of Bath, as experienced by both men and women, in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. Personal financial statements and receipts from Augusta Work, Ruth Tarbox, and their relations give an account of the largely non-maritime domestic finances that underlay the family's position in society.

The bills and receipts paid by Bernard L. Tarbox provide a particularly detailed look at the life of a fashionable young man in Bath's upper crust. In addition to quotidian payments for clothes, flowers, and club dues, these receipts also include the outfitting of a yacht, *Louise*, from Bath's maritime suppliers.

Box and Folder List

I: Business and Financial Papers

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | 1 | Receipt, Tobias Ham to Elabeth Lamont, 1768 |
| | 2 | Deed, James Riggs to James E. Riggs, 1859 |
| | 3 | Captain Abel E. Work, <i>Bombay</i> (ship), papers and accounts, 1873-1878 |
| | 4 | Captain Abel E. Work, <i>Thomas M. Reed</i> (ship), papers and accounts, 1880-1884 |
| | 5 | Captain Abel E. Work, <i>St. Mark</i> (ship), papers, 1889 and undated |
| | 6 | Captain Abel E. Work, <i>St. Mark</i> (ship), business correspondence, 1889-1894 |
| | 7 | Augusta (Fisher) Work, financial papers and receipts, 1883-1925 and undated |
| | 8 | George Fisher, financial papers and deed, 1877-1908 |
| | 9 | Ruth Pearl (Work) Tarbox, financial papers and receipts, 1898-1917 and undated |
| | 10 | Alfred L. Tarbox, financial papers, 1921-1934 and undated |
| | 11 | Bernard L. Tarbox, personal bills and receipts, May 8, 1905 – May 1, 1906 |
| | 12 | Bernard L. Tarbox, personal bills and receipts, May 17, 1906 – January 1, 1907 |
| | 13 | Bernard L. Tarbox, personal bills and receipts, February 11, 1907 – August 1, 1907 |
| | 14 | Bernard L. Tarbox, personal bills and receipts, August 9, 1907 – October 10, 1907 |
| | 15 | Bernard L. Tarbox, personal bills and receipts, October 22, 1907 – December 1907 and undated |
| | 16 | Alfred Lemont Tarbox Jr., financial papers, 1925 |

II: Personal Papers

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 17 | Captain Abel E. Work, letters from Augusta (Fisher) Work, 1893-1894 |
| | 18 | Augusta (Fisher) Work, letters from Captain Abel E. Work, 1877-1895 |
| | 19 | Augusta (Fisher) Work, personal papers and ephemera, 1874-1923 and undated |
| | 20 | Ruth (Work) Tarbox, personal papers and ephemera, 1885-1928 and undated |
| | 21 | Ruth (Work) Tarbox and Alfred L. Tarbox, wedding invitations, 1903 |
| | 22 | Alfred L. Tarbox, personal papers and ephemera, 1905-1943 and undated |
| | 23 | Alfred Lemont Tarbox Jr., personal papers and ephemera, 1908-1922 and undated |
| | 24 | Miscellaneous cards and ephemera, undated |
| | 25 | Miscellaneous clippings and ephemera, 1896-1937 and undated |
| | 26 | Photographs and negatives, 1893 and undated |